

## **EXILE TIBETANS PROTEST AT INDO-TIBET BORDER ON EVE OF TORCH RELAY**

### **Three detained at Shipkila border post after staging protest; 38 others detained in Pooh, Reckong Peo and Rampur**



Shimla - Two exile Tibetans were detained by Indian border forces at approximately 10:30am today as they attempted to cross the Indian border into Tibet near Shipkila Pass in Himachal Pradesh. With Tibet in view, the two Tibetans staged an iconic protest, raising a Tibetan national flag, calling for an end to China's occupation, and denouncing China's plans to take the Olympic torch into Tibet. Chime Youngdung, President of the National Democratic Party of Tibet, aged 33, along with Konchok

Yangphel, Public Relations Officer of Tibetan Youth Congress, aged 29, held up Tibetan flags and a banner reading, "Free Tibet Now," and started marching the last ten kilometers toward Tibet when they were arrested by Indian border forces. Legdup Tsering, 20, who helped document the incident, was also arrested a few hours later.



"We came to demonstrate to China, and to the world, that Tibet belongs to Tibetans and we will never give up in our fight for freedom," said Chime Youngdung. "We have taken this action today to show our solidarity with our six million Tibetan brothers and sisters who are living under siege and being brutally oppressed by the Chinese authorities."

The protest at the Indo-Tibet border comes just days before the Chinese authorities plan to take the Olympic torch to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital rocked by protests in March, as well as Gormo and Kokonor, areas of Eastern Tibet's Amdo province (Chinese: Qinghai province) where a majority of the recent protests occurred. After postponing the Tibet leg and refusing to provide details of the new dates and route, Chinese officials announced on Tuesday that the torch will go to Lhasa on Saturday.



"The Chinese government is using the Olympic torch as a political tool in an attempt to legitimize its rule in Tibet and the International Olympic Committee has now endorsed this cynical propaganda scheme," said Konchok Yangphel, who was born in Tibet but fled to India to escape China's oppression. "Tibetans will keep up our struggle long after the Beijing Olympics have ended, and we will never give up until we stand as free people on Tibetan soil."

The two men detained for protesting at the Indo-Tibet border today are part of the March to Tibet coordinated by five leading Tibetan NGOs that set out from Dharamshala on March 10th - the same day when the most recent uprising throughout Tibet began in the Tibetan capital Lhasa. On June 4th, following a 13-day standoff with hundreds of Indian police at their camp at Baanspatan, 265 Tibetans on the march were arrested at Berinag, approximately 150 kilometers from the Indo-Tibet border area in Uttarakhand state. On June 17th, the final 50 Tibetan marchers were arrested at Dharchula, the last Indian township before the Tibetan border.

At 6:30 am today 21 Tibetans were arrested in Reckong Peo in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, located approximately 100 km from the Indo-Tibet border post. The detainees have started a hunger strike in jail, refusing to eat and drink until they are released and allowed to continue the march. Another 10 were arrested in Rampur later in the morning. Yesterday seven others were arrested in Pooh (also spelt Puh) which is the last Indian township before entering Tibet. Pooh is located 35 km from the Indo-Tibet border post at Shipkila.

Tibetans living in exile in India launched the March to Tibet as part of the Tibetan People's Uprising Movement. On the same day that the march was launched, monks from monasteries in Lhasa, as well as in eastern Tibet, led nonviolent demonstrations, shouting slogans supporting the Dalai Lama and independence for Tibet. Chinese authorities brutally suppressed peaceful protests that continued for days, leading to rioting in the capital and a wave of large public demonstrations that have rippled across the country. The March to Tibet and the Tibetan People's Uprising Movement aim to revive the spirit of the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959, and engage in nonviolent direct action to bring about an end to China's illegal occupation of Tibet.